

Minutes of the SWINDON PARISH ANNUAL MEETING
held on
21st April 2015
at Swindon Village School

Present:

Councillor Peter Allen (Chairman of the Parish Council)
Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to the Parish Council)
Councillor Flo Clucas (guest speaker)
9 members of the public

Apologies:

Councillor Helen Wells

Minutes of Previous Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes of the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting held on the 13th May 2014 were accepted.

Introduction by Councillor Allen

Councillor Allen welcomed to everyone to the meeting.

Presentation by Councillor Allen

Councillor Allen's presentation is attachment 1.

Discussion with Councillor Flo Clucas

Councillor Allen then introduced Councillor Clucas. Councillor Clucas talked about her background as a member of the Liverpool City Council during difficult times. Council land was being sold and built on and people were being bullied. Councillor Clucas was involved in a number of reforms and initiatives to improve the area. Councillor Clucas moved to this area for personal reasons and did not anticipate being a councillor again. She is currently one of the two Borough Councillors for the Swindon Village ward of Cheltenham. She is currently on the planning committee but this makes it difficult for her to express her opinions on some of the local development issues, including the JCS. Councillor Clucas will be coming off the planning committee in May.

In discussion Councillor Clucas made it clear that she sees a major difference between affordable housing and exploitative housing. Coming from Liverpool she had had no experience of working with a Parish Council.

We are currently in a situation where everything is changing. Politicians are perceived differently and the electoral system is broken. County, District and Parish Councils need to discuss how things should work; for example perhaps the Borough Council should take care of the roads.

Central government will have to start giving money to local government. The funding cuts that started in the 70s have continued. Councillor Clucas said that she is not in favour of districts combining into bigger or even unitary authorities. District councils are working together to reduce back office costs. For example, Cheltenham Borough Council's IT support is performed by the Forest of Dean District Council and legal support comes from Cotswold District Council. This is best practice and is different to merging the different councils into a unitary authority.

In discussion it was generally acknowledged that it is very difficult to get action or even a response

out of the County Council. Councillor Clucas has had to resort to applications under the Freedom of Information Act to get her questions answered.

If roadworks are performed by statutory undertakings they are responsible under the guarantee for making good any defects. The County Council does not seem to make this happen.

Councillor Allen stated that the Chartered Parishes meetings with the County Council and the Borough Council has become less useful. Where previously representatives of major County/Borough Council departments would be present there now seems to be only a community engagement representative plus one other.

Councillor Allen stated that a number of consultations have been run that have not been true consultations at all. Decisions have already been made and the consultation is just a "tick in the box".

There is no strategy for traffic management in the area. Developers are only responsible for managing the traffic within their developments and onto and off those developments. Councillor Allen stated that Swindon Parish has not seen any benefits from section 106 money from developers. Councillor Clucas suggested that we should get together with other parishes to target uses for Community Infrastructure Levy (the successor to section 106).

It was suggested that Swindon Village be turned into a "Homezone".

Regarding the JCS, most of the land in the North West Urban Extension is in Tewkesbury Borough yet it is on the edge of Cheltenham. Tewkesbury Borough Council would clearly be happy to see development take place here.

Councillor Allen proposed a vote of thanks to Councillor Clucas for supporting our meeting.

Report on the Parish Council Finances by Shaun Cullimore (Clerk to the Parish Council)

The Clerk reported on the Parish Council finances for 2014-2015. See attachment 2.

Any Other Business

Councillor Clucas reminded the meeting that the Community Pride fund is now open for bids for grants of up to £4,000.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm.

Shaun Cullimore
Clerk to Swindon Parish Council